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The Reformed Journal

A PERIODICAL OF REFORMED COMMENT AND OPINION

The NAE and the Church of Christ
LEWIS B. SMEDES

Once Again — the NAE! GEORGE STOB

The Report on Infallibility HARRY R. BOER

Toward More Biblical Studies
LEONARD SWEETMAN

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MAY 1961

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HENRY STOB, HARRY R. BOER, JAMES DAANE, LESTER DEKOSTER, GEORGE STOB

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LETTERS TO THE JOURNAL

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In This Issue

EDITOR LESTER DEKOSTER raises some pointed questions about recent U.S. failure in democratic leadership. He is concerned that we define more explicitly and courageously what we are *for*, and that we face up to our faults.

Two articles deal with the question of the membership of the Christian Reformed Church in the National Association of Evangelicals. In the first article, Dr. Lewis Smedes shows that the NAE is not the kind of organization to which any *church* may properly belong, certainly not a Reformed church which takes the biblical nature of the church quite seriously. In the second article, Dr. George Stob approaches the question historically. He points out that the decision of the CRC to withdraw from the NAE in 1951 was based on eight years of careful study. This decision, moreover, was maintained and confirmed through three years of further questioning of its propriety and wisdom by Classes and Synod. Dr. Stob shows that there appears to be little ground even for reconsideration of this decision, much less for renewed membership.

The three articles on a Christian Reformed Study Committee's report on scriptural infallibility and inspiration will, we trust, help readers of the *Journal* to understand a sometimes difficult subject. In the first article, Dr. Harry Boer sees a degree of ambiguity at the heart of the Report. The Report seems to defend two somewhat different views, the traditional and the contemporary. Traditionally, the church has held to an infallibility (and therefore an inerrancy) of literary and historical data. The contemporary view discovers biblical infallibility in the intent and purpose of Scripture. In the second article, the Reverend Leonard Sweetman finds in the Report some hope for a rebirth of serious biblical studies in the Christian Reformed community. Mr. Sweetman gives the evidence for such hope, and then goes on to show that the "more serious Biblical study" might well begin with the exegetical section of the Report. In the third article, Dr. Anthony Hoekema takes note of the Report's insistence that the infallibility of Scripture does not imply a kind of meticulous accuracy which would do violence to the purpose of Scripture. He then gives evidence that the two great Reformed theologians, Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck likewise insisted that the Scriptures have not been written with meticulous precision but have been written with the overriding concern that in submitting to them a man should be made wise unto salvation.

As We See It

THE PRICE OF LEADERSHIP

Like a stone tossed into a pond, our American adventure in counter-revolution in Cuba will send for a long time a pattern of ripples around the world. They will rock political boats, some of them our own.

We aligned ourselves, it appears, with less than the majority of Cuban people. We argued in the U.N. that Fidel Castro had betrayed his countrymen, though those who had been thus "betrayed" were less persuaded than was Mr. Stevenson. We played events by ear, and the tune grew more shrill all the time — from the dulcet sound of benign but interested ignorance to the staccato assumption by the President of full personal responsibility for our "participation" in the affair. To fib when one may hope to bluff out the fib may be diplomacy, but to tell half-truths when the whole truth is just around the corner is hypocrisy to no end but disgrace.

The post mortems which we enjoy so much are now in progress. It is easier to look back than to look ahead, and the next crisis may well be upon us while the newsprint still groans under analyses of the last.

But what will we Americans find as we search our souls about "What Went Wrong in Cuba?"

We are apt to find, if I may draw the distinction, a good many *mistakes* but few if any *faults*. (Say for these purposes that *mistakes* occur in the choice of means to an end, while *faults* occur in the choice of ends themselves.) We will, I say, enjoy mulling over the mistakes, while thus blinding ourselves to the possibility of faults. But fault there was. Ask yourself: What goal beyond "ditch Castro" had we, or have we, as a people or nation or Administration enunciated for those Cubans whose "betrayal" Mr. Stevenson so often lamented? What ends have we in view for the people of, say, South America whose stirrings chill our spines and persuade the President to suggest that the press exercise caution in reporting the next uprising? And what end have we in view for the people of Africa and of Asia whose voices, long silent, are finding frightening articulation in our time?

That the Russians have ends in view for all of these awakening millions need not be doubted. That they work at them unremittingly enough is obvious. But we, *what* do we *stand for* in the world's market place which we hope will bring colonialized peoples thronging to our side?

Can we assume that men will fight on our side just because it is *our* side? Have we given them, by word and performance, a clear and specific apprehension of what "our side" means to them, in bread, in clothing, in dignity, in self-government, in freedom? Are we gradually losing Laos only because the Communist forces are so strong and well-supplied, or also because those on "our side" have small view of what we really intend for them and small taste for our indecision? Say that the Communists promise land — what do *we* say about that same land? Say they promise — falsely, to be sure — self-government and freedom from foreign influence? What do *we* promise about these things?

We promise less, no doubt, because we mean to keep our promises. But, in fact, what face do we want the world to behold in us? What comprehensive view of foreign nationalisms around the stirring world do we have? Do we see democracy arising? and approve? Or have we a lingering taste for the status quo? What price will we pay to give democracy leadership?

Wilson spoke of "self-determination." So did Governor Williams — once — in Africa, but it was in slightly muffled tones, not loudly nor since repeated. What do we really want, then, in Africa? Jefferson advocated revolution for those who found their governments in the way of human

ends; and Lincoln meant what he said about government of, by, and for the people. But what do *we* think about revolutions *now,* for peoples grown weary of foreign dominion and exploitation — including our own? What do we *stand for* in the eye of the world? America largely defined its national purposes by anti-Fascism in the forties, and by anti-Communism in the fifties. But finding ourselves defined mostly by what we are against is the first step to decadence and futility.

So long as we ask, in the present crisis, "What went wrong in Cuba?" without also asking "What fault may have been our own?" we might almost as well ask nothing at all.

Let me suggest the *fault* I have in mind by going back a little.

We supported Castro once, not long ago. We thought of our forefathers at Valley Forge, it may be, and urged him onward. Then he won. How soon we cooled, turned frigid, and ended these last few weeks licking our wounds. Why? I do not pretend to know, but hazard one guess. We found, perhaps, the price of "revolution" too dear. He ruthlessly took our property and gave it away to his people. Perhaps he was, indeed, pro-Communist from the beginning and fooled us all along; but perhaps he turned to the help he could get when his thefts aroused our ire. In any case, he stole; and we thought less and less of Valley Forge. But is not this the pattern we sense will display itself all around the world? The British *lost* a colony that *we* could be *free.* What will we, and our allies, have to *lose* in order that others may be free? Have we the courage to face that question? Whose *fault* were Castro's thefts?

Theft is theft! Law is fundamental to international community. But foreign revolutions will be aimed, in the years ahead, at expropriated theft, of land, minerals, of industries, of buildings, of rights and possessions.

If we stand only *against theft* we will find ourselves standing against national aspirations and fighting a losing if valiant game through the years.

What then?

If exploitation is the taking of more out of a country, in any form, than is replaced or developed within the country, in any other form — natural resources, human resources, culture, money, goods — then let us admit that we and our allies have been guilty of exploitation. So at last the exploited peoples revolt and in turn exploit us by expropriation. And we quickly lose our taste for such revolution, as these peoples have long ago lost their taste for us and our perversions of Wilson, Lincoln, and Jefferson. What then?

Why not, then — and our not doing so is the *fault* I aim at — *confess* that we have expoited and do exploit? Why not confess that, exploitation aside and *even had there been none at all,* the Cubans have a *right* to Cuban resources? and South Americans to *theirs*? and Africans and Asians to *theirs*? Insisting at the same time, and so distinguishing ourselves from the Russians, that the realization of these rights must be *under law,* and is the paramount international task of our generation! (remembering the while that if the transition is not effected under law it will come about by fearful waste of human blood). Who will lead these peoples to stumbling, it may be, but bloodless and *legal* possession of their own resources? If we do not, our enemies will, not legally and not so peacefully; and then we, and all the world, will be the bitter losers.

How shall this be done?

Supposing that after Castro had come to power in Cuba we had, from our national treasury, loaned to him at no interest (an atonement of sorts, say, for whatever of exploitation the Cubans had suffered) funds enough for him to take possession, through private hands or as he thought best, of the properties he has now stolen. Supposing we had offered aid for health, education, welfare; and markets for Cuban goods. All this, mind you, done consciously as atonement — and with but one firm requirement, namely, free Cuban elections in regular succession!

Supposing, in short, we had admitted to a fault, instead of coming to mistakes, and had atoned for it by giving back, in the long run, more than we once had taken? — not only in Cuba, where it is now rather late for atonement; but also in South America, and, with our allies, in Africa and elsewhere?

In point of fact, the cost might not exceed our defense budget for a few years. Considering the alternative to be other Cuba's around the globe, sponsored and taken over by our watchful and astute enemy, we might even consider this kind of arrangement a good bargain. (And this is the weakness it would then develop; Yankee bargains have been driven too often already.)

Such a program, however, entered into honestly and with good intent, promises a hope that mere military aggression, no matter how successful, can never assure. And I venture the assertion that it merits the adjective Christian, if done in faith.

—L.D.K.

The N A E and the Church of Christ

by Lewis B. Smedes

THE APPEAL THAT THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF Evangelicals appears to have for segments of the Christian Reformed Church suggests to me that our conscience is not at peace on the score of our ecumenical aloofness. Many of us are restless of spirit as we lament the division of Christendom and our own isolation from all of the ecumenical movements. We are wondering whether the Spirit may not be drawing Churches together in earnest conversation and whether we may not be resisting the activity of the Spirit. We have to do with the catholicity of the Church. Catholicity is still an attribute of the Church, but an attribute that we do not seem seriously trying to realize in fact. Confessions concerning catholicity on the part of Calvin bolster us in the conviction that our concern is a genuinely Reformed concern. Catholicity, says Calvin, teaches us "that, as there is one head of all the faithful, so all ought to unite in one body, so that there may be one Church spread throughout all the earth, and not a number of Churches" (Calvin's Catechism). This year Classis Holland is asking Synod to recommit the Church to membership in the NAE, a request which we trust is motivated by the ideal of catholicity. Classis Holland asks Synod to "make our ideal concrete" by joining the Church to a broadly conceived association of Christian believers. The question is whether the NAE is the kind of organization in which the Christian Reformed or any Church may properly seek to fulfil its ecumenical ideals.

THE NAE IS AN ASSOCIATION OF EVANGELICAL Christians; it is not a council of Christian Churches. It is an organization of like-minded people; it is not a fellowship in which Churches seek to discover their common faith. It is a platform for the voice of individuals; it is not a platform for the voice of the Churches. It is a convention of people joined for effective action; it is not a convention of Churches seeking avenues of common service. The NAE is a legitimate and probably valuable arena in which individuals can find fellowship with believers of other communions and perhaps form a valuable function in concert with them. But the NAE is not, in my judgment, a framework of fellowship in which the Church may participate.

The NAE does, it is true, invite Churches to join its ranks. Without doubt it is eager to have the Christian Reformed Church among them. But the fact that it allows Churches within its membership only underscores the anomalous character of its fellowship. The NAE evidently does not take the Church seriously as a thing different from an association of believers. Hence, it draws no distinct line between the membership of individuals and the membership of the Church of Christ within its non-ecclesiastical structure. Indeed, Churches are not really treated differently within its business structure from individuals. The individual Christian Reformed ministers who are now members of the NAE have respectively as significant a vote in the proceedings of the NAE as would the *entire* Christian Reformed Church. This is to say that though Churches join the NAE they are treated as non-Churches. The NAE would, I think, clarify its present position by ruling out Churches and by accepting only individuals as members.

The question is whether it is fitting for the Church of Jesus Christ to become a minor part of an association of individuals. Surely the answer is plain. Only a Church that has stopped taking itself seriously as the Holy Catholic Church could put itself in such a compromising position. If we could conclude that the Church is the same kind of thing as is the NAE — a voluntary association of like-minded people loosely united for practical action — we might join. But the Christian Reformed Church has a higher notion of the Church of Christ than this. The Church is, to be sure, an association of believers. But it is a special kind of association. Created by the Spirit of Christ, joined to Christ as its Head, informed by Christ as its life, marked externally by His Word and Sacraments, charged to speak of Him to the world, the Church is *sui generis* a unique institution that stands by itself. *This* association does not become a member of a larger association which is not a Church. The nature of the Church does not seem to have played a large role in Classis Holland's thought. Surely it will in the mind of Synod.

MANY OF US SHARE CLASSIS HOLLAND'S UNEASINESS with our lack of ecumenical participation. Some of us would be grateful if the NAE were a real opportunity for our Church to participate in an ecumenical experience. When I suggest that it is not a means of "making our ideal concrete" (Classis Holland), I am not rejecting the NAE for being Arminian, fundamentalist, negativistic, or any of the other characteristics frequently ascribed to it. I personally could not in good conscience demand that the NAE be everything theologically that we are as a condition for our joining it. My objection to having the Christian Reormed Church join the NAE is based on the structure of the NAE. The

NAE is not an answer to the problem of divided Christendom because the division of Christendom involves the division of the Churches, while the NAE avoids this very matter. In fact, for the Church to join the NAE is a way of saying that the Church and its divisions do not much matter.

The NAE is an ecumenical surrogate. It begs the question of the Church and its catholic character. It appears to offer itself as an alternative to the National Council, the American Council, and the World Council of Churches, but it cannot be an alternative to these. It is another kind of thing. It is a fellowship outside of and alongside of the Church. As such it has a reasonable claim on the support of fellow evangelical people. But it has a claim on the membership of evangelical Churches only if we are willing to admit that the Church is nothing more than a conference of like-minded persons.

Since the NAE in convention is addressed by prominent clergymen, has commissions active in quasi-Church affairs, issues resolutions on matters that concern the Church, it often seems to take on the character of a Church association. But this is a false impression. The voice of the NAE is the voice of individual men. The work of the NAE is the work of an association of individuals. When, a decade ago, the Christian Reformed Church objected to the NAE's mission activities, it objected from a concern that the Church and any association respect their proper spheres. If the NAE has stopped doing mission work, it has done a good thing. But it has not removed what, in my mind, is the basic obstacle to our participation. The NAE, in this instance, has become more consistent with itself and has thus made more clear the impropriety of the Church's membership in its organization.

THE NAE IS, IT SEEMS TO ME, CONCEIVED IN ECUmenical skepticism and defeatism. Overwhelmed by the practical and theological obstacles to a real fellowship of Churches, Christians tend to seek a fellowship of witness and service without the Church. This is what gave birth to the NAE. One can sympathize with those who feel that the walls separating the Churches are insurmountable and that a realization of catholicity must be left for heaven. The barriers to true unity and catholicity do seem exceedingly formidable. The World Council of Churches is at present experiencing afresh that the theological studies stimulated by contact between varying Churches have exposed differences as much as they have healed wounds. But it is wrong to be defeatist about the unity and catholicity of the Church. Better that we spend ourselves in prayer, concern, and conversation about the Church and its divisions, better, too, that we seek more fellowship with the Churches, than that we compromise the nature of the Church by settling for a fellowship that is beneath the dignity of and contrary to the nature of the Church.

I HAVE NOT MEANT WITH THIS TO DISPARAGE THE NAE, its leaders, or its activities. There are many facets to the NAE that are worthy of our support as individual Christians, just as there are also aspects of the NAE that seem to me to need change. What I have been saying, however, is that the NAE is not an association offering our Church an opportunity to "make our ideal concrete." Our ideal is and must be the catholicity of the Church. As long as we think of the Christian Reformed Church as the Church of Jesus Christ we will seek our ecumenical fellowship with Churches, not with associations of evangelical people.

Once Again — the NAE

by George Stob

THE 1961 SYNOD OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED Church will have to consider two proposals bearing on our relationship to the National Association of Evangelicals.

One comes from Synod's own Standing Committee on Ecumenicity and Inter-Church Correspondence. It is in response to a "suggestion" of the NAE in 1957 that we reconsider the matter of our affiliation with the NAE. This "suggestion" from the NAE was referred to the Committee above referred to. And now the Committee reports, and it recommends "that Synod accede to the request of the NAE to consider reaffirmation." The other proposal comes by way of an overture from Classis Holland, asking "Synod to reaffiliate with the NAE."

Neither of these proposals are very new. They are both very old. For a right evaluation of them, we should see them in the context of the earlier history of our relationship to the NAE, and in the light of the considerable measure of study and discussion which has revolved about this subject, and a number of decisions already made with reference to the matter.

We Affiliate With the NAE

In 1943 the Christian Reformed Church became a member Church of the National Association of Evangelicals. One might suppose that such a major step had been long in the making and under careful study and consideration. This was not the case. The Church at large knew nothing about even the

ossibility. But when the Synod of 1943 was over, he Christian Reformed Church, without having een enlightened or consulted, found herself a mem- er of the National Association of Evangelicals.

It happened in this fashion. In February 1943 he California Ministers' Conference of the Chris- ian Reformed Church called the Synodical Com- nittee's attention to a movement under way for niting Evangelicals in some kind of Association. A Convention for the forming of such an organiza- ion was to be held in May 1943 in Chicago. The 'alifornia Ministers' Conference thought the Chris- ian Reformed Church should have a representative t this organization meeting "so that we may pos- ibly guide the thought of the conference in a direc- ion acceptable to our way of action". (Acts 1943, . 151).

The Synodical Committee decided to send three inisters as "observers" to the Convention, and 'alvin Seminary Faculty sent one of its members. 'hese four Christian Reformed men were accorded elegate status, and therefore participated in the rganization of what came to be known as the Na- ional Association of Evangelicals. The Synodical observers," reporting to the Synodical Committee nder date of May 24, 1943, expressed a favorable udgment about the newly formed Association, and oncluded: "We would therefore advise your Syn- dical Committee that we join the National As- ociation of Evangelicals, at least provisionally, un- ess there is a more worthy organization of a kin- red nature. If at any time we should feel that here is a conflict between the movement and our enominational principles which would warrant our ithdrawal from the Association, we could do so" Acts 1943, p. 154). The Synodical Committee in ts report to Synod said: "Your Committee did not ave an opportunity to consider the foregoing re- ort with its suggestions. We pass it on to Synod or any possible action Synod may feel inclined to ake" (Acts 1943, p. 155).

After Synod convened, an overture from the 'irst Church of Bellflower, Caliornia was placed n the Synodical table. It had not been published n the Agenda. It urged that our denomination hould affiliate with the National Association of Evangelicals. At the same Synod a representative f the American Council of Churches urged our ffiliation with that organization, and a member of he Calvin Seminary Faculty who was elected as ne of the Administrators of the National Associa- ion of Evangelicals urged our affiliation with the atter organization. Without any further study or nquiry than that indicated above, the Synod of 943, upon recommendation of the Advisory Com- nittee, decided, in the last day of its session, "that ve as a denomination become a member of the Jational Association of Evangelicals" (Acts 1943, . 137).

We Question Our Affiliation

The Church which had no opportunity to express herself before affiliation with the NAE took occasion to express herself after the affiliation — and the reaction was largely critical and negative.

Already in 1944 two Classical overtures critical of our NAE membership were placed before Synod. Classis Hudson asked that we "sever relations" with the NAE unless it desist from the work of "evangelism and missions." Classis Holland asked for an investigation into our relationship to the NAE and questioned "the propriety of joining such an organization, [and] of endorsing an ecclesiastical program in which religious groups and churches with radical differences will cooperate" (Agenda 1944, Part II, pp. 162, 163). Synod, however, decided to continue affiliation.

In 1945 Synod decided to continue affiliation with the NAE "with the understanding that we caution our consistories to be careful concerning some of their propaganda activities" (Acts 1945, p. 101). In 1947 our NAE delegates, heretofore unanimous in recommending continued affiliation, were divided in their recommendations. A minority of two recommended "that we discontinue our membership as a denomination with the NAE," and "that we continue our membership in the Commissions of the NAE which are purely functional and protective in character" (Acts 1947, p. 403). Synod again decided to continue membership. In 1948 two different minority reports recommended withdrawal from the NAE, one repeating the recommendation of the minority of 1947, and another proposing complete and unconditional withdrawal from the NAE. The Synod of 1948 decided to appoint a special Study Committee to inquire into the propriety of our membership in the NAE.

In 1949 the Study Committee reported, a majority of four recommending that "Synod terminate the membership of the Christian Reformed Church in the National Association of Evangelicals," and a minority of two recommending that we "continue our membership in the NAE as heretofore and seek to make it increasingly effective and productive." Synod tabled both reports and decided to appoint another committee to make a study of basic principles bearing upon inter-church relations (Acts 1949, pp. 23, 24). The Synod of 1950 took no further action, since the report of the Study Committee on Inter-Church Relations had not been printed in the Agenda, but it did resolve to "express its emphatic disapproval" of certain activities of the NAE (Acts 1950, pp. 69, 70).

We Withdraw from the NAE

In 1951, after the Church had had adequate opportunity to take into account the recommendations of both Study Committees and had been served by discussion that had taken place in Church periodi-

cals, Synod decided by a considerable majority "to terminate the membership of the Christian Reformed Church in the NAE" (Acts 1951, p. 79).

The decision to sever relations with the NAE was hardly one that could be called hasty and thoughtless, being, as it was, the fruit of eight years of inquiry, question, investigation, study, and discussion. But some of our membership were unhappy with it. There was an attempt to reverse the decision at the next Synod, with Classis Ostfriesland and Classis California asking for reconsideration of the decision to withdraw from the NAE. The Synod of 1952 refused to accede to the request for reconsideration by sustaining the ruling of the president that these overtures for reconsideration (i.e., for beginning debate anew on the whole issue settled in 1951) were out of order (Acts 1952, p. 40).

Classis Ostfriesland was not satisfied with this reply, however, and in 1953 it challenged Synod's disqualification of its 1952 overture. It further asked that the Synod of 1953 provide carefully formulated grounds for the decision of the Synod of 1951 to withdraw from the NAE. The Synod of 1953 decided to appoint a Study Committee to study the overture of Classis Ostfriesland (Acts 1953, pp. 93, 94).

In 1954 a majority of the Study Committee recommended that another Study Committee "be appointed to study the question: "Was the Christian Reformed Church justified in severing its connection with the NAE?" The Synod rejected this recommendation. It maintained that the decision to withdraw in 1951 was based upon repeated consideration and lengthy discussion and was taken with adequate reference to the report on interchurch relations. It further observed that the decision of 1951 was not taken without grounds, these grounds having appeared in a letter addressed to the NAE informing them of our withdrawal from that Association (Acts 1954, p. 64).

Here, then, was a decision to withdraw from the NAE based on eight years of careful and painful soul-searching and study. It was, furthermore, a decision maintained and confirmed through three years of further questioning of its propriety and wisdom by classical overtures and the report of a Study Committee.

Since 1954 there has been no further request or proposal coming from within the church asking for reconsideration of our relationship to the NAE.

In 1957, however, a proposal for reconsideration did come from outside the church — from the NAE. This was our Centennial Year, and the NAE took occasion to congratulate us on this happy anniversary. Incidentally it suggested that this might perhaps be an opportune time for us to reconsider the matter of affiliation with the National Association of Evangelicals. One would suppose that after eight years of considering our relationship, and after three years of refusal to reconsider our well-considered decision to withdraw, it would have been easy to reply to the NAE by thanking them for their congratulations and informing them that after our long thought and study and after our refusing reconsideration to two of our own Classes and one of our Study Committees, reconsideration would hardly be in order.

But for some strange reason the Synod of 1957 referred this request of the NAE to the Committee on Ecumenicity, without any mandate or instruction of any kind. Formally, the only question before the Committee was the question as to whether we should or should not reconsider, i.e., remove the decision of 1951 from the "settled and binding" category, and once again make it an open question. The Committee on Ecumenicity, however, seems to have proceeded on the assumption that the Synod of 1957 made it an open question, and found in the "referral" of the NAE "suggestion," a mandate. Says the Committee: "The point of this mandate is to consider the question of *reaffiliation*" (Agenda 1961, p. 320).

Shall We Reconsider, Reaffiliate, or What?

It is unfortunate that the question as to whether we should reconsider has not received due attention.

It is a basic principle of Reformed Church government that in the communion of the Church all shall acquiesce in what has been decided upon by majority vote, unless one is compelled by conscience to do otherwise. It is improper and unfruitful for minorities to exert themselves in repeated attempts to secure reversal of a decision which was not pleasing to them. One may, and indeed should, make overtures for reconsideration or reversal of position if he feels that important principles have been violated or weighty considerations have been ignored in any Synodical decision. But for such reconsideration or reversal strong and weighty reasons must be adduced. A mere request for reconsideration without grounds, or such a request with no grounds other than those already faced, ought not to be entertained by any Synod.

It was on the basis of these principles that the Synod of 1952 refused to give reconsideration to the question of our NAE membership when overtured to do so by Classis Ostfriesland and California. In ruling these requests for reconsideration out of order, that Synod concurred in the advice of the Advisory Committee which said: "It is evident that if such procedure would be allowed, it would be an invitation to disorder in the life of the Church. Synod would be in danger of having its decisions subjected to endless Synodical debate, and no Synodical decision could ever be considered settled and binding. Reconsideration is out of order in the light of Church Order Article 31" (Acts 1952,

. 40). And this position was maintained by the ynod of 1954 against a Study Committee's recommendation that we reconsider affiliation with the AE (Acts 1954, p. 64).

It is somewhat surprising that after former Synds held to the principle of Article 31 of our Church rder, against proposals from two of our own lasses and a Synodical Study Committee, the Synd of 1957 should have referred a mere "suggesion" for reconsideration by a non-ecclesiastical ody like the NAE to study by a Standing Comittee. And it is phenomenally strange that after hree years of study, the Committee on Ecumenicity hould have been so greatly moved by an incidental suggestion" of this non-ecclesiastical organizaion as to go far beyond a proposal for reconsideraion and come with a proposal for "reaffiliation."

Perhaps the prior question in the whole NAE natter appearing before this Synod is the question s to whether adequate reasons have been adduced y anyone for *reconsideration* of a firm decision ade by the Synod of 1951 after eight years of tudy and maintained and confirmed by the Synds of 1952 and 1954.

An examination of the report of the Committee n Ecumenicity and the overture of Classis Holland ill make it clear that no real grounds have been dvanced for even the *reconsideration* of our relaionship to NAE, and very much less for the *reffiliation* which they both propose.

The Committee on Ecumenicity recommends that Synod accede to the request of the NAE to onsider reaffiliation." They come to this recomendation, we are advised, "after a careful reiew" of the history of our relationship with NAE, in the light of scriptural teaching, and in the face f the great need today of strong solidarity of witess by those of 'like precious faith with us'" Agenda 1961, p. 322).

The "historical review' given by the Committee s very sketchy. What is more, the history of the AE question seems rather to discourage our aceding to the NAE request, as we trust has become pparent from the historical survey given earlier n this article.

As far as Scriptural teaching is concerned, the ommittee adduces none unless one accept their ere statement that "our belief in the scriptural eaching concerning the Holy Catholic Church . . . ompels us to realize that there is a broader ecuenicity than the ecclesiastical ecumenicity repreented by the Reformed Ecumenical Synod." Even o, a proof for "broader ecumenicity" is not yet eighty reason for our "reaffiliation" with the AE from which we withdrew in 1951.

Concerning "the great need today of strong soliarity of witness by those of 'like precious faith ith us,'" the Committee offers no evidence except a broad assertion that "Romanism and un-Christian cultism, Modernism, social and moral disintegration — all these compel us to the conclusion that we cannot hope to wage effective battle for Christianity single-handed." But on this matter let it be said that we never presumed to nor do we in fact "wage . . . battle for Christianity single-handed." Nor is it evident how our affiliation with the NAE will strengthen our hands or those of the NAE for the great battle against "Romanism, and un-Christian cultism, Modernism," etc.

There is little need to say very much about the overture of Classis Holland, since it repeats in attenuated fashion the same kind of argumentation appearing in the report of the Committee on Ecumenicity.

There is little doubt that the problem of ecumenicity is a large and important one, and we ought not to be content simply to occupy a separatist position and react negatively to proposals to enter into broader relationships. If, however, we are to do justice to the ecumenical principle in terms of the teaching of Scripture and the urgency of the world situation, we ought to inquire into ecumenical possibilities and responsibilities more thoroughly and broadly and fundamentally than has been done heretofore. And we ought not too readily to assume that a small and splinter organization like the NAE will enable us to discharge our concern for "broader ecumenicity."

This is, indeed, what the Synod of 1957 asked for in one of its decisions, in which it charged "its Committee on Ecumenicity and Inter-Church Correspondence to study existing ecumenical organizations and to advise the Synod of 1958, in accordance with Reformed principles, practices, and action, whether the Christian Reformed Church should seek membership in one of these organizations" (Acts 1957, p. 103). There has been some endeavor to fulfill the requirements of this large mandate. But if we take account of what has been done before and what has been done in connection with the most recent "study" of the NAE, we may well concur in the judgment of Professor Marten Woudstra in the April 11 issue of *Church and Nation* that "the result has not been overly impressive."

This is not the fault of the Committee, but of the rather minor and routine character that has been assigned to the Committee. No doubt we should address ourselves with more care and thoroughness than we have been in position to do up to this time to the great question of ecumenicity. And in order that this might be done, would it not be well to enlarge the Committee on Ecumenicity and make it more broadly representative of the Church in the United States and Canada than it is at the present time?

The Report on Infallibility

by Harry R. Boer

THE REPORT OF THE SYNODICALLY APPOINTED COMmittee to study the question of the infallibility of Scripture now lies before the Church. It is a hefty piece of some seventy-five pages in the Agenda, and it manifests a great deal of work on the part of the committee.

A synodical committee's report is always to a large extent determined by its understanding of the mandate under which it works. The specific mandate of the committee was "to study the relationship between inspiration and infallibility in the light of Scripture and our own Creedal statements." This mandate allowed considerable room for theological initiative and for new insights which might have been derived from the large number of Biblical studies that the theological world has produced in the present century. This possibility was cut off at the start, however, by the committee's acceptance of synodical decisions made in 1959 on infallibility as limiting the scope of its investigation. The committee makes it very plain that it is a servant of synod, not of a free and unhampered investigation limited only by the terms of its specific mandate. "Patently, Synod wanted our Committee to make its investigation in the light of what Synod had decided, adopted and declared, not to make an investigation of its decisions, adoptions and declarations to find out whether or not they are correct" (p. 120). The hope entertained by many that the committee would launch out into an independent study would therefore seem to be disappointed.

It would, however, be unfair to the committee to say that this is wholly true. The report gives evidence of the committee's awareness that it is living in the theological world of the 1960's, not the 1860's. Its concern to give more attention to the divine intention in the inscripturation of the revelation, its emphasis on the message of the Bible in distinction from the verbal framework in terms of which the message comes to us, its rather unexpected strictures on the decisions of the Synod of 1959 as also on those of previous synods, its emphasis on the historical character of the revelation — these things all indicate a tension between old and new emphases which is in its own way refreshing.

The fact remains, however, and the committee would probably be the first to acknowledge this, that the basic reference of its study makes the new insights more peripheral than central. The new emphases cannot be called more than qualifications of the traditional conception. They are there, however, and this gives significance to the report. But because they are there in conjunction with the traditional view there lies in the heart of the report an ambiguity which leaves the careful reader in uncertainty as to what is meant by infallibility.

Perhaps this article can serve the discussion of the report best by centering attention on the ambiguity in question. It should be remembered, however, in all the criticisms and qualifications that I feel called to make of the report, that the presence of the ambiguity is perhaps an unavoidable condition of coming eventually to a clearer understanding of what it means that the Word of God has come to us through the agency of finite, sinful, and historically conditioned men.

THE REPORT GIVES A VERY CLEAR DEFINITION OF THE word "infallibility." It means that Scripture is "non-deceiving, i.e., non-falsifying; that it is inerrant; and that it is non-failing" (p. 150).

That Scripture is in this way infallible the committee had previously concluded from an extensive exegetical study of five texts of the New Testament (II Tim. 3:16, 17; II Peter 1:19-21; Matthew 5:18; and John 10:35) supported by allusions to many other texts in the Bible. This exegesis we shall not here pursue or analyze other than to say that by a process of what seems to us as special pleading the committee makes unabashed the great jump from the *authority* and *inspiration* of Scripture clearly taught in these texts to its *infallibility* and *inerrancy*. This infallibility and inerrancy is attributed to Scripture again and again throughout the report, and in such a way that the most conservative disciple of the traditional view can heartily concur.

But there are other sounds also. "By 'accuracy,' 'inerrancy,' and 'consistency' we should not in the first instance mean that the historical, psychological, or phenomenological statements of Scripture conform precisely — as we today understand precision — to event, or circumstance, or nature or parallel statement, but that they completely fulfil the Spirit's purpose for making these statements" (p. 157). And later, Scripture is "wholly adequate unto the intent and purpose for which it was given. It infallibly conveys the meaning envisioned by its author," and "The adequacy, perfection and sufficiency of Scripture is geared to its redemptive intent and purpose, which is also true of its infallibility. Those qualifications permeate the total structure of Scripture to its whole extent and in all its parts" (p. 184).

So now, what kind of an infallibility do we have: an infallibility of intent and purpose, or an infallibility of literary and historical data? The traditional view is the latter, and that is the view that has been very strongly defended in our circles since the question arose. It is the view that our synods have historically taken. This view does indeed include the former; but when infallibility is further defined as one of intent and purpose it does not necessarily include the idea of infallibility with respect to all literary and historical data.

THE COMMITTEE UNFORTUNATELY DOES NOT TAKE UP any of the "problem passages" about which it has quite a bit to say in the abstract. What would it do, for instance with the David-Saul relationship in I Samuel 16, 17? In the sixteenth chapter David is presented as one loved greatly by Saul and as the son of Jesse with whom Saul corresponded upon several occasions about David's services. But in the seventeenth chapter Saul, having seen David's great victory over Goliath, wants to know "whose son" the young man is. "Abner, whose son is this youth?" And Abner said, "As your soul lives, O king, I cannot tell." And the king said, "Inquire whose son the stripling [not David, whom he greatly loved] is." . . . And Saul said to him, "Whose son are you, young man?" And David said, "I am the son of your servant Jesse, the Bethlehemite." How these data are to be harmonized so that both are infallibly true, I do not know. I cannot imagine the same author as having written both accounts. But if the infallibility here concerned is one of intent and purpose, then there is no problem whatsoever. On such matters, the committee unhappily gives no light. *But it is these matters* and not whether Samson slew *exactly* one thousand men with the jaw-bone of an ass or possibly nine hundred and ninety-seven which are called a thousand, and many similar instances (p. 191), which are the issue in the infallibility question.

Again, one asks what the committee means when it writes, "We may not lift any portion of Scripture, however large or small, out of its original context in the larger body of inspired literature and still claim for it, in its artificial isolation, divine trustworthiness" (p. 152). This is a good principle to govern the pursuit of Biblical theology, but how does it help us in the question of infallibility? Matthew 27 tells us that Judas brought the betrayal money back to the temple, threw it down, and then went and hanged himself. Acts 1 says that he bought a field for the money and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. Here we have two accounts of the death of Judas which *as facts* cannot be squared except by taking recourse to rather fantastic harmonistic exegesis. Theologically I have not the slightest difficulty with this lack of correspondence. Judas reaped the reward of his perfidy no matter how one reads these accounts. They occupy a significant place in the history of revelation, having roots in impressive preceding developments. But *as history* they represent a once-for-all event which cannot have taken place in two wholly disparate ways. How can one read them otherwise than as two separate accounts "in isolation?" Theologically they say the same thing. As factual history they have the same thrust but are irreconcilable on the score of what Judas actually did with the money and of how he actually died. Those who oppose a rigid infallibility simply claim the right to say that these two accounts do not square as to the facts while both teach the same profound Scriptural truth and are thoroughly adequate conveyors of the divine message. Is it right to read Scripture in this way, or is it not? The committee has spoken no clear language in answer to this question. But, *this is the question, the issue, in the infallibility problem.*

THIS BRINGS US TO THE QUESTION OF THE IMPORTANT distinction which the committee makes between the teaching of the Bible with respect to its own infallibility and the phenomena of Scripture which bear on the problem of infallibility. Scripture, says the committee, is infallible. However, there are phenomena (such as literary and historical data) which may seem to qualify this understanding. May we take these phenomena into account in constructing a doctrine of infallibility? The answer to this question is no. There is no end of phenomena in the Bible and if we were to wait with framing our doctrine of infallibility until these have all been examined, there would be no end to the waiting. Meanwhile the committee itself has not been one bit backward in adducing bushels full of phenomena texts to support its own position.

The phenomena or data of Scripture which do not square with one another *as to factuality* are many. At least, that is the conviction of a good many students of the Bible. The David-Saul and the Judas accounts are only two that can be multiplied many times. May this circumstance play any role in framing our conception of Scripture? The committee says it may not, and in saying so it uses a most interesting and fruitful illustration. Let us examine this illustration.

The committee writes, "The doctrine of the sinlessness of Jesus rests solely on the explicit teaching of the Bible and in no degree on our examination of the life of Jesus. Even so, our doctrine of Scriptural infallibility must rest solely on Scripture's own claims" (p. 159). I am quite unable to understand the committee at this point. Our doctrine of the Person of Christ rests *most importantly* on the life of Christ, and that life includes His words. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit

the sacred writers found in that life their further exposition of His Person. Why did the Son of God become *incarnate*? Why did he show us a life of meekness, humility, patience, love, courage, purity, prayer, trust, if not to show us that he was the Lamb of God without blemish? What meaning or value do the explicit teachings of the Bible about His sinlessness have apart from His life of sinlessness? In very fact, it is the phenomena of Jesus' life that make the teaching about His sinlessness possible. The phenomena are as important as the teaching. The Biblical teaching about the sinlessness of Christ rests on the teaching *and* on the phenomena.

Now as it is with the Word incarnate, so it is with the Word inscripturate. The words *and* the phenomena, the teachings *and* the data, must make our doctrine of Scripture, not the former only without regard to the latter. One marvels much to read the committee's highly proper and appreciated awareness that the revelation given in Scripture is an historical revelation, a *fact* revelation, only to discover that in its construction of the doctrine of infallibility history, facts, data, phenomena all of a sudden become meaningless. On the nature of Scripture we apparently have no historical revelation but only a teaching revelaton divorced from history. It is true that the committee freely uses the phenomena of Scripture to substantiate its own point of view (cf. especially pp. 128-30). But it disallows all that creates difficulty for its view, and it adduces a theory about phenomena to justify the exclusion. But is this responsible theology?

IT IS THIS EASY DIVORCE BETWEEN TEACHING AND phenomena that makes it possible for the committee to claim infallibility for Scripture. It should be carefully noted that the Bible nowhere teaches its own infallibility. The infallibility of Scripture is an *inference*. It is a derived, not a direct teaching. *This the committee explicitly admits.* It states, "If . . . the inference from inspiration to inerrancy, or infallibility in the larger sense, is drawn by Scripture itself, then we are on solid ground. . . . An examination of the Scriptural testimony discloses that this latter is indeed the case" (pp. 150-51). What gives cogency to this statement is the assertion that *Scripture* draws the inference. This is, however, an extremely hazardous position. Does the Bible say that it infers its own infallibility? It does not. If it did it would no longer be for us an inference. How then do we know that it "infers" it? This the committee elucidates by saying that Jesus and His apostles accept the complete trustworthiness of the Old Testament on the ground that it was God-breathed, that it was written under the moving of the Spirit, and that men spoke "in the Spirit." Furthermore, Jesus ascribed the same authority to the Old Testament that He claimed for Himself and He bowed to its authority. Finally, Christ's appointed ambassadors were endowed with His Spirit and therefore their writings are infallible. On these grounds the committee concludes, "The inference from inspiration to infallibility is indeed legitimized by the revelation itself" (p. 151). I see nothing here that had not been said before. It is hard to escape the feeling that the committee has done the inferring for the Bible.

In any case, the admission that the inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible is an inference is a highly important one. Is it not a fundamental principle underlying the formation of the creeds of the Church that they are based on the *direct* and *explicit* teaching of the Bible? Do we accept as credally binding any *inference* which we say the Bible makes from its own teaching? Let us in all honesty admit that when we say "the Bible infers" we mean that *we* infer. Do we say anywhere that the Bible *infers* the creation, or the fall of man, or the call of Israel, or the covenant of the old dispensation? Do we say anywhere that the Bible *infers* the incarnation of the Son of God, or His atoning life and death, or His resurrection and session at the right hand of God? Do we say anywhere that the Bible *infers* the deity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? Where do we say that the Bible *infers* our election in Christ, the reality of the Church, the meaning of the sacraments, the forgiveness of sins, the life to come? Where do we say of *any* doctrine of the Church that it is an inference which the Bible makes from its own teachings? Have we ever said that the authority of Scripture is an *inference* which Scripture draws from its own teachings? But now the committee says that the doctrine of infallibility is an *inference.* An inference of the Bible, it is true, but an *inference* and therefore *our* inference. With what right may this bind the reflecting mind of the Church? The committee itself says, "If it [infallibility] be only an inference drawn by theologians and church assemblies it has but limited value" (p. 150). But in which way is the inference which it imputes to Scripture *more than an inference which the committee itself draws?* The Church in its official creeds says, "Thus saith the Lord." It does not say, "Thus saith the inference of Scripture from itself." The Church will do well in her witness to the world and to herself not to go beyond the explicit teaching of the Bible. If we will do this, "then we are on solid ground."

ONE FURTHER OBSERVATION MUST BE MADE. THE REport has very little to say about historical criticism, and what it says is mainly of a negative character. Is it fair to historical criticism to refer to it only as opposed to God and His Word? Are there not many historical critics who love God and his salvation as devotedly as we? And how honest are

ve with ourselves when we do this? In the Februry issue of the *Journal* I pointed out in considerble detail how Reformed theologians in the Netherlands who are held in esteem among us for their orthodox integrity make extensive use in their study of Scripture of the methods of historical criticism. There has been no critical reaction to this exposition in any of our papers during the more than two months that have passed. Indeed, there could not well be, for I wrote sober documented truth. What is more, there has been no criticism in our Church of the methods pursued by these men over a period of more than thirty years. If the methods of historical criticism are so much of the devil, what kind of keepers of our brethren in the Netherlands have we been? And what must we think of the integrity of the head of the department of Old Testament at Calvin Seminary when he makes repeated attacks on the president of his own institution about a conception of Scripture while remaining utterly silent in a teaching ministry extending over thirty-seven years about viewpoints espoused by his opposite numbers in the Netherlands which are so far to the left of anything Dr. Kromminga said that one can hardly see them? Surely we have some heart-searching to do, and it is regrettable that the committee on infallibility did not make some observations in this direction.

THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE, WHILE BEING SUBject, as it seems to this writer, to the strictures that have been made, presents a number of hopeful and helpful insights which can be enlarged on in subsequent discussion. The report is factual, sane, sober, and calm. It is indeed a study report rendered in the best of study spirit. The committee claims no finality for its findings and we will use it best, it seems to me, as a point of departure for further study in the specifically academic area of our Church's life. The committee will have rendered no inconsiderable service if its report reminds the Church again of the complexity of the problem and of the need of both freedom and carefulness in the discussion of it.

Toward More Biblical Studies

by Leonard Sweetman

WHEN THE SYNOD OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED Church begins its sessions on the 14th of June, among the Agenda items to be considered in its deliberations, Report No. 24, "Infallibility And Inspiration in the Light of Scripture And the Creeds," will command considerable interest. The Study Committee appointed by the Synod of 1959 has prepared a lengthy Report which discharges the Committee's mandate: "To study the relationship between inspiration and infallibility in the light of Scripture and our own Creedal statements"; and "to study the matter upon which Synod withheld judgment." The matter referred to is "whether or not a view expressed by President Kromminga in his paper 'How Shall We Understand Infallibility?' is consistent with the Creeds." The Committee, furthermore, confined its study to the area defined by two previous Synodical decisions. In 1959, Synod adopted the conclusions concerning Inspiration reached by the Fourth Reformed Ecumenical Synod. Furthermore, in 1959 Synod "made a Declaration regarding the impropriety of positing actual historical inaccuracies in the Bible."

FORMALLY, THE REPORT IS DIVIDED INTO NINE CHAPters. The heart of the matter is studied in Chapters II-VII in which the testimony of the Scriptures and of the creeds with their doctrinal implications is investigated, as are the previous Synodical declarations concerning the authority, inspiration and inerrancy of the Scriptures. Chapter VII, entitled "Concluding Observations," sums up the materials studied and suggests fruitful areas in which further studies can be made. A brief introductory chapter, a short study of the position of President Kromminga and three recommendations complete the Report.

When you read the recommendations, you sense something of the positive contribution this Report may make to serious studies of the Bible in the life of the Christian Reformed Church. The Committee recommends "that Synod submit this study report to the Church as a guide (to form rather than to bind the mind of the Church) in understanding the concept of Scriptural infallibility." May Synod be guided by the brooding Spirit of Christ to do precisely what the Committee recommends. In the light of the nature of this Report such a procedure may well serve to bring about a renaissance of serious Biblical studies in the Christian Reformed community.

That this Report may precipitate serious Biblical studies is a judgment deduced, above all, from reading Chapters III-VII. In these chapters, the

Report takes seriously the "human character" of the Scriptures and strives to avoid a Docetism relative to the Scriptures.[1] The influence of the historical contexts out of which the Scriptures emerged is recognized (p. 159). The diversity of literary form and quality is stated clearly (pp. 155, 184). The unique literary and theological contributions of the various authors are admitted (pp. 153, 154-155, 157, 182-184).

Furthermore, this Report may well precipitate serious Biblical studies because of the general perspective from which infallibility and inerrancy are viewed. This perspective is stated and re-stated throughout the Report. May this perspective be set forth again and again in the life and practice of the Christian Reformed Church during the coming years. The general perspective is stated in various ways, but it is stated consistently. A selection of the various descriptions of this general perspective follows.

> Scripture speaks with divine authority and trustworthiness on all things on which it chooses to speak *in so far* as it chooses to speak of them (p. 133).
>
> Scripture, when evaluated as a unique instrument fashioned for a specific purpose, i.e., to provide a permanent, literary embodiment of the redemptive self-disclosure of God to men within history, is inviolable (p. 147).
>
> . . . We can distil from the doctrine of plenary verbal inspiration only that Scripture possesses a divine trustworthiness on matters concerning which it speaks, not on matters on which certain passages, in isolation, may seem to speak, nor yet on matters on which men, by improperly handling Scripture, may seek to force Scripture to speak (p. 152).
>
> The adequacy, perfection and sufficiency of Scripture is geared to its redemptive intent and purpose, which is also true of its infallibility (p. 184).

Permit me to quote one more statement of this general perspective, which is found on page 153:

> Scripture must be supposed to speak with divine trustworthiness on all matters . . . on which Scripture claims to speak authoritatively.

This perspective, moreover, resulted in the Committee's positing "four relevant facts concerning Scriptural revelation" which must be remembered. (1) Scriptural revelation is "a fact-word revelation," (2) arising out of specific historical contexts whose influence may not be ignored. (3) The criteria used in scientific study must be those of the type of literature being investigated. (4) And, finally, the Scriptural revelation is progressive. These statements necessitate our taking seriously the historical character of revelation. Scripture is not merely a story about God's redeeming activity; the story, the history, is itself God's redeeming activity. Jesus does not merely tell us *about* God's redemption, reconciliation, renewal; in the particulars of His life and suffering and death and resurrection God reconciled the world unto Himself. These facts enable us to deal seriously with the Old Testament as *Heilsgeschichte*, rather than as a source of stories which can be given a nice moral twist. These facts, moreover, necessitate our recognizing that Jesus' parables, sayings, miracles and paranetic materials have the character of *Heilsgeschichte* too. The Church, in short, is now challenged, officially, to determine what it is that the Scriptures claim to declare. What is the gospel? By virtue of the nature of this Report, furthermore, this Church is challenged to ask and to seek an answer to this fundamental question in the area of Biblical studies.

The basic perspective, "that the Scriptures must be supposed to speak with divine trustworthiness on all matters . . . on which Scripture claims to speak authoritatively," is maintained in the Committee's study of the Creeds. This is evident, above all, in the discussion of the statement found in Article IV of the Belgic Confession: "We believe that the Holy Scriptures are contained in two books, namely, the Old and the New Testament, which are canonical, against which nothing can be alleged." This statement, the Report contends, refers to the canonicity of the Scriptures. Which books constitute the Holy Scriptures? This is the question Article IV answers. The Report further states that this must, of necessity, include the content of that which is declared canonical, although I do not follow the logic of that position. Grosheide's *Algemeene Canoniek* precludes the possibility of our making a judgment concerning the Canon, as does, it must be added, the Report, following the Belgic Confession, Article V: "We *receive* all these books, and these only, as holy and canonical . . ." (Agenda, p. 169).

This attitude toward the canonical content of the phrase "against which nothing can be alleged" is demanded by the basic perspective of the Report, namely, "Scripture must be supposed to speak with divine trustworthiness on all matters . . . on which Scripture claims to speak authoritatively." Scripture does not claim to speak with scientific accuracy when it speaks of, among other matters, a geocentric universe and a "three-decker" universe. Therefore contexts in which these phenomena are posited must be studied seriously as integral elements in the historical revelation of God's grace. In this study, however, we must remember the limitations with which we must discipline ourselves: we may not demand the scientific or historiographical precision and accuracy we may demand of a textbook. We must prosecute our study in the con-

1. In this context, "Docetism" is a refusal to take seriously the fact that the Bible is *simultaneously* a human and divine book.

text of the Scripture's purpose: to witness to Jesus the Christ.

Very little is said concerning the Apocrypha books (Belgic Confession, Article VI). This is one area in which serious study is necessary. For example, we confess that the *Church* (not merely private individuals) may read the Apocrypha. We must recognize, moreover, that these books served sectors of the Church for a period of time as canonical literature. We must admit, too, that the reaction against these books during the Protestant Reformation is understandable, in part, in historical terms. And during the nineteenth century, moreover, the ecclesiastical neglect of the Apocrypha was accentuated by minimizing the Semitic influence on the literature of the New Testament. Today, however, almost all scholars recognize, to various degrees, a significant Semitic influence in the New Testament; and it is recognized that some Old Testament concepts have been amplified and/or translated as they appear embedded in the strata of the literature of the New Testament. The source of this phenomenon, it is generally agreed, can be traced, in part, to the literature of the intertestamental period. Therefore the Church ought to take cognizance of the Apocrypha for the purpose of evaluating their influence upon various New Testament concepts." ". . . The Church may read and *take instruction from* [the Apocrypha], so far as they agree with the canonical books. . ." (Belgic Confession, Article VI). This study of the Apocrypha, I suspect, will result from the stimulus to serious Biblical study represented by the Report.

Report No. 24 has made a further contribution which may stimulate the Church to undertake serious Biblical studies. The Report reviews previous Synodical decisions concerned with specific cases in which "the Christian Reformed Church has gone on record in giving an interpretation to crucial statements of the Belgic Confession (Articles III-VII) concerning the authority of Scripture" (p. 185).[2]

This review is important for Biblical studies. The Report states that the previous decisions "are not fully defined doctrinal pronouncements. They are juridical declarations issued in the adjudication of specific cases" (p. 190). Furthermore, "this is not to pretend that all the complex and sometimes perplexing problems regarding the infallibility of Scripture have been solved" (p. 190). Again, the Report cautions the Church to beware of building "a defense for an infallible Bible merely on the basis of a historical apologetics. . . . Historical apologetics which seeks to authenticate Scripture involves a denial of the self-testimony of Scripture and pre-supposes that Scripture must be authenticated by evidence drawn from extra-Biblical sources. . . . Historical evidences can do no more than demonstrate the general reliability of the Bible as a book of history. But it is not as a history book that the Bible speaks to us" (p. 191).

Report No. 24 places the infallibility of the Scripture in the context of God's historical revelation of grace realized in the life and death and resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ. And, finally, the Report challenges the Church to pursue her basic task, which is "to search the Scriptures for the testimony which they give of Christ. He, not Scripture, is the Saviour and Lord of the Church, the supreme object of our faith. To faith in the Christ of the Scriptures the Church must call the world" (p. 192).

This is the mandate which Report No. 24 gives to the Christian Reformed Church. It challenges the Church to take the Scriptures seriously in terms of the purpose of the Scriptures, and it places before the Church the entire matter of hermeneutics. Being confronted by the hermeneutical problem, the Christian Reformed Church is boosted into the center of contemporary theological studies. The hermeneutical problem is one of the most significant problems faced in the theological world today. In fact, this problem may well be the most important problem faced by the Church today. The Report challenges the Church to ask, "What is the Bible saying?" The answer to that question will enable the Church to ask the further question, "What message, then, do we have to declare to the world today?" If the Report precipitates this result in the life of the Christian Reformed Church, it will have realized the hopes and prayers of its authors.

In studying the Report I felt that its weakest section was found in the chapter concerned with "The Testimony of Scripture" and, though to a lesser degree, the chapter concerned with "Doctrinal Implications of Scriptural Testimony." Perhaps if these chapters had been rewritten after the other chapters were formulated their content would have been somewhat different. In a sense, "The Testimony of Scripture" is fundamental to the other chapters: however, in another sense, the methodology employed in this chapter originates in the context, the perspective, defined and elaborated throughout the Report.

In determining the Scriptural witness concerning the relationship between inspiration and infalli-

2. On pp. 187-188, six important statements are made that delineate precisely what Synod declared and what she did not declare in 1959 when Synod said "that it is inconsonant with the Creeds to declare or suggest that there is an area in Scripture in which it is allowable to posit the possibility of actual historical inaccuracies." These statements are the basis of many further statements made through the Report in which an attempt is made to describe what is not meant by a historical inaccuracy in the Scriptures.

bility, the Committee made a study of the texts which, traditionally, are assumed "to teach" these "doctrines." In studying these texts, however, the exegetical methodology employed, I suspect, approximates what the Dutch refer to as *klank exegese*: that is, certain words are associated with ideas encountered and accepted in earlier experience and formulated with some degree of uniformity by our peers. These formulated ideas deriving from earlier experience are, moreover, regarded as being reliable delineations of the Scriptural text containing the word which stimulated the response. To state the matter differently, certain words cue us to transfer to the Biblical context in which they occur formulations and descriptions learned and accepted in an academic discipline other than Biblical studies or in an experience which differs considerably from a scientific study of the Scriptures. "Covenant" "Cross," "Christ" are some of these cues, as are "inspiration" and "infallibility" with which we are now concerned.[3]

In the Report, II Timothy 3:16, 17; II Peter 1:19-21; Matthew 5:18; and St. John 10:25 are studied. These texts, traditionally, have been referred to when "inspiration" and/or "infallibility" are discussed. If we examine the Report, we find that the methodology used by the Committee in their study of these texts approximates what I have described as *klank exegese*. For example, the Committee uses a debatable translation of the text of II Timothy 3:16: "Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable. . . ." In this translation, tion, "inspired of God" is a subordinate clause; nevertheless, the word "inspired," *theopneustos*, is pivotal in understanding the content of the entire text. Grammatically, the point of this statement, even if it were to be considered in isolation from its context, seems to be that this Scripture which is inspired by God and which is profitable produces a complete or perfect man of God.

Moreover, the word *theopneustos*, "inspired," occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. Therefore, although it undoubtedly adds to our understanding of the Scripture's nature, is it not a bit hazardous, methodologically, to pour more content into this word than the context warrants? Historically, theologians have taken great pains to validate the translation "God-breathed" for this word *theopneustos*. Warfield, as is well known, has done this in *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible.*

3. Incidentally, we are faced here with the necessity of evaluating the concept and function of "Tradition" in the formulation of theology. I suspect we may be influenced by tradition in our theological activity to a greater degree than we are willing to acknowledge as we consider the concept of "tradition" in isolation. Our appeal to the authority of historical Reformed theologians to validate a particular theological formulation is an example of our use of tradition in theological activity.

Yet it may be asked whether there is not a hiatus in the reasoning that takes the concept as it is found in secular and religious literature and applies it to the specific context of II Timothy. Furthermore, if the validation of the word's meaning in II Timothy be granted, its centrality in the context in which it is found in II Timothy must be demonstrated.

The importance of *theopneustos* in Chapter II of the Report is obvious. The "God-breathedness" of Scripture is characteristic of "all Scripture" and is the foundation of Scripture's "Profitableness." Submission to this "God-breathed Scripture" which is profitable enables one to be the perfect man of God. The truth-nature of this construction I do not question, but I do wonder whether II Timothy 3:16-17 says all this.

Paul's use of the "profitable" Scriptures is documented. The authoritative Scriptures speak on many subjects: on matters of doctrine, divine promises, predictions, and on matters of ethical principles and moral precepts. In this latter category, I Timothy 15:18 (a reference to Deuteronomy 25:4) is cited. Study of this passage would have altered the Committee to the danger of *klank exegese*, I suspect. Deuteronomy 25:4 states: "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn." The Committee's response to Paul's use of this statement is interesting.

> Guided by this principle the Church is to count the elders that rule well to be 'worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and in teaching' (I Timothy 5:17). 'Is it for the oxen that God careth,' Paul asks the Corinthians, 'or saith he it assuredly for our sakes?' (I Cor. 9:9, 10). The question is rhetorical. His answer: 'Yea, for our sake it was written.' From it he draws the conclusion that they who sow spiritual things ought properly to reap carnal things from those to whom they minister (v. 11) (p. 124).

One can easily say that this is God-breathed Scripture, and that consequently it is authoritative. The perfect man of God bows in submission to this Word. This procedure, however, ignores the basic problem found here. Paul treats the Old Testament Scripture in a manner which is honored neither among our theologians nor among our theological students. He uses an exegetical method which was acceptable among his contemporaries: the symbolic-allegorical method of interpreting the Old Testament.[4] This phenomenon is not an isolated case. The writers of the New Testament used hermeneutical methods in their interpretation of the Old Testament which were acceptable to their contemporaries. Of what significance is this fact in our present context? Apparently the Holy Spirit approved the use of hermeneutical techniques which

4. Cf. Strack-Billerbeck, *Kommentar Zum Neuen Testament*, III, 383ff., 386.

we no longer approve and of which, in part, we disapprove. Well do I realize that this illustration is one of the phenomena of Scripture; however, the didactic or paranetic sections of the Scripture are, essentially, part of the phenomena of the Scriptures, too. Interestingly enough, this phenomenon of Scripture is quite consistent with the general perspective of the Report: "Scripture must be supposed to speak with divine trustworthiness on all matters . . . on which Scripture claims to speak authoritatively."

Furthermore, the Holy Spirit, apparently, placed more confidence in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament (the Septuagint) than do we. As is well known, the Septuagint is used more often in the New Testament quotations of the Old Testament than is the Hebrew Masoretic Text. The Committee limits "the activity of the Holy Spirit in inspiring Holy Scripture . . . tto the writing of the original manuscripts. It does not extend to the translations of the originals" (p. 121). In spite of this statement, however, in the discussion of II Peter 1:21, a relationship is established between Genesis 1:2 and II Peter 1:21. The reason for this is that the word predicated of the Spirit's activity in II Peter is the same word which is predicated of the Spirit's activity in the Septuagint's translation of Genesis 1:2. The Committee merely mentions this verbal similarity. No evidence is given to substantiate any real similarity between the form or the content of the two passages in question. If, however, we recognize that the Scriptures are simultaneously a human and a divine book, verbal similarity will not lead us spontaneously to the conclusion that there is material similarity. This must be demonstrated using the criteria of the literary types in which the verbal similarity is found (cf. Report No. 24, p. 155).

In the discussion of Matthew 5:18, the authoritative nature of Scripture's details is illustrated. In Matthew 22:29-32, it is stated that "the Sadduccees had failed to give due consideration to the tense of a verb" (p. 141). In this context the Sadduccees are questioning Jesus concerning the resurrection of the dead. In His reply, Jesus declares that the Sadduccees are in error because they do not know the Scriptures. The Scriptures state in Exodus 3:6: "I am the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob." Jesus makes His point by concluding that "God is not a God of the dead but of the living."

It is frequently said that the validity of Jesus' argument depends upon the tense of the verb "to be."

Concerning this matter several facts should be stated:

(1) Jesus did not use the Old Testament's best proof of the resurrection of the dead. What material He used, He took from the Law. There are, perhaps, two reasons why He followed this procedure. First, the Sadduccees questioned Him concerning a matter found in the Law: the Levirate marriage. Secondly, the Sadducees did not accept the Prophets and the Sacred Writings as divinely authoritative in the same manner and to the same degree that they accepted the divine authority of the Law. Therefore Jesus used the Scriptures which were accepted as authority by the Sadducees to make His point. Incidentally, Judaism did not possess the uniformity in Jesus' day which scholars at one time thought it possessed. This lack of uniformity was evident in the extent of the Old Testament's authority, as well as in other areas.

(2) In Exodus 3:6, "I am the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob" possesses a verb form in the Septuagint; however, there is nothing in the Hebrew Old Testament to correspond to *eimi*. In the 1922 edition of F. W. Grosheide's commentary on Matthew's Gospel, no mention is made of the significance of *eimi* in Matthew 22:32; however, in the reprinted and enlarged edition of 1954 we find a footnote in which Professor Grosheide states that he will lay a certain amount of emphasis on the verb *eimi* even though there is no equivalent for this in the Hebrew Old Testament.[5] In his exposition of Matthew Herman Ridderbos does not attach any special significance to *eimi*.[6] The point Jesus wishes to make is dependent upon God calling Himself the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This relationship, "I — thy God," is indissoluble. God, moreover, is not a God of the dead, the destroyed. Therefore Abraham, Isaac and Jacob must be living. The enduring relationship between God and the patriarchs, established by the gracious God of heaven and earth, rather than the tense of the copulative verb, is the point of Jesus' argument. "God is not the God of the dead but of the living" forms Jesus' conclusion. This phrase is not a commentary upon the significance of a present tense, since that type of argument is more impressive in English than in Greek. That type of argument, however, would have been impossible for one speaking Hebrew or Aramaic to understand.

THESE ILLUSTRATIONS UNDERSCORE THE FACT IN the exegetical section of Report No. 24 we find the weakest section of an otherwise challenging report. Let us take this report. Let us study it. With it, let us turn to the Scriptures "for the testimony which they give of Christ. He, not Scripture, is the Savior and Lord of the Church, the supreme object of our faith. To faith in the Christ of the Scriptures the Church must call the world."

5. F. W. Grosheide, *Het Heilig Evangelie Volgens Matheus* (Kampen: Kok, 1954), 2nd ed., p. 336, note 2.
6. H. N. Ridderbos, *Korte Verklaring Der Heilig Schrift* (Kampen: Kok, 1954), 2nd ed., p. 120.

Kuyper, Bavinck, and Infallibility

by Anthony A. Hoekema

THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFALLIBILITY,[1] which appears in the *Agenda* for the coming Synod, and is now in the hands of our consistory members is, I believe, a competent piece of work. It represents the results of a thorough investigation (within the time allotted), and embodies a great deal of valuable material. The evidence of Scripture for its own infallibility is carefully worked out, and the teachings of the Creeds, particularly of the Belgic Confession, on the inspiration of Scripture are discerningly summarized. The doctrinal implications of both the Scriptural material and the creedal statements are competently set forth. The Report does not try to leave the impression that the last word on infallibility has now been said, but it recognizes that there are problems which remain to be solved and that there is work in this area which still needs to be done.

The Formula Consensus Helvetica

There are, to be sure, a number of inaccuracies in the report, most of which, we trust, are typographical errors. Without wishing to detract from the value of the report as a whole, I should like to call brief attention to an error in historical judgment found in the report (and frequently encountered in other contexts): namely, the assertion that the "mechanical dictation theory" is embodied in the *Formula Consensus Helvetica* of 1675 (*Agenda*, p. 122).

Though I may be mistaken, I have not been able to find in this creed, which was directed against the theological views of the French School of Saumur, any reference to the manner of Biblical inspiration. The *Formula* is concerned to defend the integrity of the Masoretic text as the authentic text of the Old Testament, calling it, in fact, "the Hebrew Original of the Old Testament" (Canon 2). The creed affirms that this Masoretic text is "not only in its consonants, but in its vowels — either the vowel points themselves, or at least the power of the points — not only in its matter, but in its words, inspired of God . . . and to its standard, as to a Lydian stone, all extant versions, Oriental and occidental, ought to be applied, and wherever they differ, be conformed" (*ibid.*). In Canon 3 the creed goes on to forbid any attempt to correct the Masoretic text by the use of the Septuagint, the Pentateuch, the Targums, or other sources.[1] What this confession affirms, therefore, is that the Masoretic text of the Old Testament must be considered the true and proper text, even including the Hebrew vowel points. This affirmation, however, tells us nothing about the way in which the text of the Old Testament came to be written — whether by mechanical dictation, or by organic inspiration. One could conceivably contend, for example, that the Old Testament was organically inspired, but that all the readings of these organically inspired autographa have been inviolably preserved in the Masoretic text. All the *Formula Helvetica* is maintaining here, it seems to me, is the "mechanical" *preservation* of the Old Testament text; it says nothing at all about the manner of its inspiration.

Incidentally, the position taken by this creed, which was aimed against the views of Louis Cappel, who contended that the vowel points were added to the consonantal Hebrew text many years after the autographa had been written, is now held by no one. Even the most orthodox Old Testament scholars are ready to concede that, on this point at least, Cappel was right (witness the lack of vowel points in the Dead Sea Scrolls), and the *Formula* was wrong.[2] We may therefore be grateful that this particular Reformed creed did not find universal acceptance, its authority being confined to Switzerland, where it did not maintain itself longer than about half a century.[3]

The Nature of Biblical Infallibility

To go back to the report, however, one of its most valuable features, to my mind, is its insistence that the infallibility of Scripture does not imply a kind of meticulous accuracy which would do violence to the purpose of Scripture. For example: "But if the purpose of the Spirit in making historical, psychological, or phenomenological statements does not require 'photographic' precision, if it requires only the precision of the 'portrait,' we may demand no

1. The text of the *Formula* used is that found in A. A. Hodge's *Outlines of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), pp. 656ff.

2. E.g., in Ex. 14:25, according to the American Standard Version, we read that God *took off* the chariot wheels of the Egyptians who were riding through the Red Sea bed. The Masoretic text here has a Hebrew word which means *to remove*. The Septuagint, the Samaritan Pentateuch, and the Syriac have suggested the addition of one letter to the Hebrew verb, so as to make it mean *bind* or *clog* instead of *remove*. The Berkeley version, edited by conservative scholars, translates with *clogged*, without telling the reader that it has emended the Hebrew text. The Revised Standard Version, often accused of liberal leanings, also uses a form of the verb *to clog*, but clearly indicates in a footnote that it has emended the Hebrew text; it is thus more honest than the Berkeley Version on this point.

3. Philip Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, I, 486. For the views of Cappel, see pp. 479-80.

more" (*Agenda,* 1961, p. 157). Or, again, note the following:

> We may not bring to the Scripture criteria of infallibility, inerrancy, reliability or accuracy — for example, the literary criteria of higher criticism or the criteria of precise exactitude of modern science — which are foreign and alien to Scripture's expressed intent and purpose. We do violence to Scripture when we demand that it comply with any and every conceivable criterion of infallibility; when, for example, we require it to meet criteria of pedantic precision which it is not intended to meet. For the whole and sole intent and purpose of Scripture is to serve as an authoritative and infallible canon for the regulation, foundation, and confirmation of Christian faith and life (*ibid.*, p. 182).

Significant also are these words:

> Scripture, although it does indeed at times exhibit rigid precision, does not claim to possess pedantic precision, nor the meticulous exactitude of a scientific treatise. Neither does its reporting of redemptive history always reflect the precise correspondence to event and circumstance which is often demanded by modern historiography. . . . Nor, finally, are its accounts always exhaustive in the sense, for example, that the evangelists supply all the data needed for writing a complete biography of Jesus. But they do contain whatever is needed to meet him as the Christ of God and to sense His high and holy claim upon our lives. The adequacy, perfection, and sufficiency of Scripture is geared to its redemptive intent and purpose, which is also true of its infallibility (*ibid.*, p. 184).

The extremely important point here made by the report has often been forgotten. If we try to impose upon the Scriptures criteria which are foreign to it, we fail to do it justice. This is precisely where much ambiguity and confusion about "the possibility of error" in Scripture has arisen. A statement may look like an error to us when it is not really an error. A statement may even be an error in one sense and not an error in another sense. If, for example, you should ask me what time it is, and I reply, "quarter after seven," when it is actually only thirteen minutes after seven, you would not ordinarily consider my answer to be in error, since you are not concerned about the kind of precise accuracy which needs to know the exact minute. If, however, my wife is boiling eggs, and she has asked me to keep track of the time, a difference of two minutes in the answer will result in either undercooked or overcooked eggs. In the latter instance, my answer to the question would have been an error, since a precise answer was demanded; in the case of a person casually inquiring about the time, my answer would not have been an error, since precision was not required. In other words, all depends on the criterion of error which you apply.

If, now, we understand that the proper criterion for evaluating the infallibility of Scripture is not that of "the precise exactitude of modern science," we shall see that the variations and imprecisions which we find in the Synoptic accounts of Jesus' ministry, for example, *may not properly be called errors,* since to call them so betrays the use of an unscriptural criterion of error. If this point had been properly kept in mind by all who took part in the infallibility discussion of the past two years, much misunderstanding could have been avoided.

The 1959 *Statement*

In this same connection, I would like to express appreciation for what the committee says about the statement adopted by the Synod of 1959, to the effect that it is inconsonant with the creeds to declare that there is an area of Scripture in which it is allowable to posit the possibility of actual historical inaccuracies (*Acts,* 1959, p. 68). If this 1959 statement should be understood as implying that, after all, the standard of meticulous, pedantic accuracy *is* a proper one to apply to Scripture, it could lead to very serious misconceptions. As a matter of fact, this type of criterion is precisely the one applied to Scripture by unbelieving, critical scholarship, with disastrous results. Professor Polman, of Kampen Seminary in the Netherlands, has expressed this point very well:

> If it is true that one can properly accuse the orthodoxy of past centuries of having had too little eye for the genuine human character of the Scriptures, the fierce historical criticism (*felle historische kritiek*) of more recent centuries has completely lost sight of the purpose and goal of Scripture, has measured it with exact scientific criteria, and has subjected it to *a priori* demands which completely fail to do justice to its religious purpose.[4]

It is therefore gratifying to note the Committee's clarification of the 1959 statement:

> In other words, this Declaration [that is, of the Synod of 1959] does not bind us to an interpretation of the Bible according to the norms of modern historical science. It does, however, make contraband every interpretation of historical phenomena which would detract from the trustworthiness of the Scriptures, so that we could no longer believe without any doubt all things contained therein (*Agenda,* p. 188).

The Committee goes on to say:

> Whether or not the Declaration has made a felicitous choice in employing the words "actual historical *inaccuracies,*" is subject to question. The word "inaccuracies" here might suggest a kind of strict precision which the Scriptures do not always exhibit. The word "error" might have been a happier choice . . . (*ibid.*, p. 188).

If this clarification of the 1959 declaration is accepted by the Synod of 1961 as "a guide in understanding the concept of Scriptural infallibility"

4. A. D. R. Polman, "Inspiratie," *Christelijke Encyclopedie,* rev. ed. (Kampen: Kok, 1958), III, 622.

(*ibid.*, p. 194), it should go far to remove the difficulties which some of us have had with this statement.

Kuyper and Bavinck

The judgment that the Scriptures have not been written with meticulous precision is not at all a new one in our Reformed tradition. It is a judgment which has been insisted upon by Reformed theologians whose orthodoxy no one would be disposed to challenge, and whose commitment to the complete infallibility of Scripture no one would dare to call into question. In the remainder of this article I intend to present, in translation, some quotations from the writings of Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck to substantiate this claim. It should be remembered, of course, that both Kuyper and Bavinck say a great deal more about inspiration than what is here quoted. Both, needless to say, affirm unequivocally the infallibility (*onfeilbaarheid*) of Scripture in all of its words and in all of its parts, over against those who would attack the Bible. The citations given, however, concern matters which have been particularly under discussion in our churches for the past two years.

Kuyper on Infallibility

To begin with Kuyper, from the *Dictaten Dogmatiek* we cull the following:

"What is the difference between divinely infallible . . . and humanly infallible?

"Man is limited; for man infallibility is thus bound to a specific form: for example, an exact correspondence (*notariële overeenkomst*) — this is, therefore, mechanical work. Human infallibility is, however, always fallible; no photograph reproduces a person truthfully, even if every hair has been accurately reproduced. A portrait-painter, however, proceeds differently; he does not count the number of hairs on his subject's head, but grasps the idea, elicits an image from the various positions which his subject takes, and paints that image. The resulting reproduction is not as precisely accurate (*notariëel nauwkeurig*), but is really much truer to reality than the photograph.

"Divinely infallible reproduces the essence infallibly, without retaining precisely the same forms (like a painting). Humanly infallible reproduces the form exactly (*notariëel*), but cannot guarantee the essence (like a photograph)."[5]

5. *Locus de Sacra Scriptura, II*, 91. The edition used was that put out by B. Sevensma in Grand Rapids, printed by Kok in Kampen in 1910. In a brief preface Dr. Kuyper asserts that these were student notes taken when he lectured on these subjects, adding that one should not consider them a *verbatim* account of what he said. He indicates that the various sections of it are of unequal value, but that he had no objection to the reprinting of these notes. We may assume that the *Dictaten Dogmatiek* generally reproduces Kuyper's ideas, with the accuracy not of a photograph but of a painting.

Kuyper goes on to apply this understanding of divine infallibility to two types of Scriptural phenomena: "In the New Testament words have been quoted from the Old Testament. Human infallibility would require a literal reproduction, including even the commas and periods; it would require the kind of copying done by a court reporter or stenographer. Divine infallibility means that the Holy Spirit took over the thought of the Old Testament quotation with freedom, and reproduced it in a somewhat different form. These changed quotations do not plead *against* but *for* inspiration, since God is an artist and not a photographer" (*ibid.*, p. 91).

"Second: What Jesus said is very important. If one wished to have Jesus' words with human infallibility, they would all have to be reproduced with the exactness of a stenographer. God has, however, set aside four evangelists for the purpose of reproducing Jesus' words. God, now, works artistically; the evangelists therefore reproduce infallibly the essence of Jesus' words, but not always in the same form in which they were spoken" (*ibid.*, p. 92).

To the same effect is the following significant statement from his *Encyclopaedie*: "No single individual could catch the full impression of a mighty event. In order to see a statue from all sides, one must place himself at various points and at various distances. And therefore we often find in Holy Scripture more than one narration of the same group of happenings — particularly in the four Gospels — not merely for the sake of repetition, but because in the consciousness of the one individual the conception and thus also the reproduction of the event had to be different than in the case of his collaborator. Thus the history lives for us. It does not furnish us with secretarial minutes (*notariële acten*), but reproduces what has been caught up in the consciousness (*wat in het bewustzijn is opgevangen*), and does this, not with the sharpness of line which is characteristic of the science of architecture, but with the impressionistic certainty which is characteristic of life itself (*de impressionistische zekerheid van het leven*)."[6]

Bavinck on Infallibility

Let us now turn to the second of the well-known giants of Reformed theology of a previous generation, Herman Bavinck. With respect to the *phenomena of Scripture*, Bavinck affirms: "The facts and phenomena of Scripture, the results of scientific investigation, may serve to explain and to illumine the doctrine of Scripture regarding itself, but they can never overthrow the fact of inspira-

6. A. Kuyper, *Encyclopaedie der Heilige Godgeleerdheid*, 2nd ed. (Kampen: Kok, 1909), II, 504.

ion to which Scripture testifies. . . ."[7] Bavinck would thus grant that we may learn from the phenomena of Scripture how we must understand the infallibility which Scripture claims for itself.

Bavinck was a great enough scholar to admit that he did not have the solution to every Biblical difficulty: "There remain difficulties enough, also for him who with childlike submissiveness subjects himself to the Scriptures. These [difficulties] need not be glossed over. There are *cruces* (baffling problems) in the Scriptures which cannot be explained away (*die niet weg te cijferen zijn*), and which will probably never be solved. . . . He who wishes to postpone faith in the Bible until all the difficulties have been removed and all the contradictions (*tegenstrijdigheden*) have been reconciled will never come to faith."[8]

With respect to the *purpose of Scripture,* note the following: "The Scripture serves to make us wise unto salvation. The Scripture has a religious-ethical purpose throughout. It is not a textbook for the various sciences. It is a *principium* of theology alone; hence the Bible requires us to read and study it theologically. With respect to all the areas of knowledge which group themselves around the Scriptures,[9] we must be concerned to obtain the saving knowledge of God. For this knowledge Scripture gives us all the necessary givens. In this sense it is completely sufficient. He who wishes to derive from Scripture a history of Israel, a biography of Jesus, a history of the literature of Israel, a history of early Christian literature, will repeatedly find himself disappointed. He will then find gaps (*leemten*) which can only be filled in by guesswork" (*ibid.*, p. 471).

"Historical criticism has forgotten the purpose of Scripture. It attempts to construct a history of the people, the religion, and the literature of Israel, and thus comes to Scripture with *a priori* demands which Scripture cannot satisfy. . . . From the four Gospels no life of Jesus can be constructed, and from the Old Testament no history of Israel can be derived. The Holy Spirit has not intended this" (*ibid.*).

"Inspiration has apparently not been the kind of dictation one would give to a secretary (*notariële opteekening*). 'When the four Gospels ascribe to Jesus on the same occasion words dissimilar in form, Jesus can naturally not have used all four forms at the same time. In such instances the Holy Spirit only aims to convey to the church an impression (*indruk*) which completely answers to what Jesus said.' "[10]

"Exact knowledge (*exacte kennis*), such as we demand in mathematics, in astronomy, in chemistry, and so forth, the Scriptures do not furnish. Such a standard may not be applied to the Bible. For this reason the autographa have been lost; for this reason the text, in however slight a measure, is corrupt; for this reason the church — and this does not mean merely the lay members — possesses the Scriptures only in a deficient and fallible translation (*gebrekkige en feilbare vertaling*). These are facts which cannot be denied. And they teach us that the Scripture has its own standard (*maatstaf*), demands a unique kind of exposition, and embodies a unique purpose. That purpose is none other than that of making us wise unto salvation."[11]

As regards the *relation between Scripture and science,* note the following: "Very much of what Scripture tells us is of principial significance for the other sciences. Creation and the fall, the unity of the human race, the flood, the origin of nations and languages, and so on, are facts which are of the greatest significance for the other sciences. . . . All these facts, however, are not communicated to us in Scripture for their own sake, but with a theological purpose: namely, that we should know God and be saved. The Scriptures never concern themselves intentionally with science as such" (*ibid.*, p. 472).

"Scripture is a book for all of mankind, for all classes, for all types of people. Therefore it is not a scientific book in the narrow sense. . . . It does not speak the exact language of science or of the school, but that of observation and of daily life. . . . It speaks of the earth as the center of God's creation, and does not side with either the Ptolemaic or the Copernican view of the universe. . . . The writers of Holy Scripture presumably knew no more than their contemporaries in the areas covered by such sciences as geology, zoology, physiology, medicine, and so on. Neither was this necessary. For Scripture uses the language of daily experience, which always remains true. If Scripture had used the language of the school, and had spoken with scientific exactness, it would have stood in the way of its own authority" (*ibid.*, p. 473).

On the question of the *nature of the historiography of Scripture,* observe that Bavinck says

7. *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek,* 3rd ed. (Kampen: Kok, 1918), I, 447.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 468. Bavinck would thus suggest that in instances where certain variations in different Biblical accounts of the same narrative cannot readily be harmonized, the attitude of suspended judgment is to be preferred to the adoption of improbable or far-fetched harmonizations. Note, incidentally, that Bavinck here does not feel it necessary to qualify the word *contradictions* with the adjective *apparent.*

9. I presume Bavinck here refers to various types of Biblical studies: exegesis, hermeneutics, isagogics, Biblical theology, and so on.

10. This is a quotation from Kuyper's *Encyclopaedie,* II, 499, quoted in Bavinck, *op. cit.*, p. 471. The edition from which Bavinck quoted is not that of 1909 used above; in that edition the statement is found on pp. 505-6. It can also be found on p. 550 of the English translation of Kuyper's book (*Principles of Sacred Theology*).

11. Bavinck, *op. cit.*, pp. 471-72.

". . . The historiography (*geschiedbeschrijving*) of Holy Scripture has its own character. Its purpose is not that we should precisely know all that happened in past times to the human race or to Israel. It does, however, relate the history of God's revelation; it reports only what belongs to that revelation; the purpose of its history is to enable us to know God in His seeking of and coming to mankind. Sacred history is *historia religiosa* (religious history). When judged from the standpoint of and according to the standard of secular history, it is therefore frequently incomplete, full of *lacunae* (*leemten*) ; it has not been written according to the rules of present-day historical criticism. From this it does not follow that the historiography of Scripture is untrue or unreliable. . . . Yet the entire historiography of Scripture witnesses to the fact that it follows its own direction and has its own purpose" (*ibid.*, pp. 474-75).

"In the determination of place and time, in the order of happenings, and in the grouping of circumstances, it [the historiography of Scripture] does not at all give us the meticulous accuracy (*nauwkeurigheid*) for which we would often wish. Its reports about the most important happenings (for example, about the time of Jesus' birth, about the length of his public ministry, about the words which were spoken by him at the institution of the Lord's Supper, about his resurrection, and so on), are far from agreeing exactly (*zijn ver van eensluidend*) and leave room for various interpretations" (*ibid.*, p. 475).

The emphasis found in the Infallibility Report on the absence of meticulous precision in Scripture is thus neither foreign to Reformed theology nor a departure from Reformed truth, but rather an emphasis required by Scripture itself. Let us hope that Synod will deal kindly with this report. Let us hope, too, that we can all find ourselves in it, and that thus, through deeper understanding and more fervent love, we may all give diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

LETTERS TO THE JOURNAL

DEAR SIRS:

As a member of the Committee which served the Synod of 1960 with advice on "The Los Angeles Case," I feel constrained to reply to Dr. Boer's article in the *Journal* of April 1961. And I hope that other members of this Synod and the Synodical Committee will likewise respond to Boer's misrepresentation of this "case."

I seriously question the right of Dr. Boer to pass judgment on a case which, for obvious reasons, has not been released for public consumption. The gravity and complexity of this case is far too serious to be discussed publicly. In order to answer Dr. Boer fully we would have to give the particulars of the case which would not be for the honor of Christ's Church or the good of the L. A. Church. But since Dr. Boer has now made public statements on this case, permit me to answer him in part.

For anyone who has read the documents presented to Synod and who has heard statements from both the appellant and representatives of the Classis concerned, it is obvious that Brother Boer has received information slanted in favor of the L. A. Consistory. The case as Boer presents it is both one-sided and incomplete. The L. A. Consistory may have acted in good conscience in placing the appellant under censure but it must be pointed out that the Classis concerned did not concur with their judgment, advising this consistory on three different occasions to lift the censure. It should also be observed that the L. A. Consistory failed to register any protest against the action of the Classis during the year and one half it was before that body. The L. A. Church thereby forfeited its right to stall the case any longer by promising to protest after the appellant declared his intention to appeal to the Synod of 1961. No case should be prolonged indefinitely and unduly by the minor assemblies after a decision has been reached by the classis. Furthermore, the L. A. Consistory had no right to threaten and then to impose further steps of discipline on the appellant after the appellant had served notice that he was appealing to the major assemblies. If the Synod was guilty of not observing "due process of law," then the L. A. Consistory certainly is guilty in its dealings with the appellant. Synod was compelled to act as the delegated guardian of the purity of the Churches. Not only the welfare of the L. A. Church is at stake, but also the welfare of all our churches.

I believe the best interest of the whole Church will be served if we will pray for and put confidence in those who are entrusted with the responsibility of resolving the L. A. case. We love the L. A. Church because she is a part of us, and we pray that God will give her Grace abundant through this trying period.

Sincerely,
ROBERT B. VERMEER
Denver, Colorado

RESPONSE

I can appreciate the interest which Rev. Vermeer has in the L. A. case in view of his membership on the Committee of Pre-advice in the matter concerned at the 1960 Synod.

It seems to me that it is not necessary to respond in length to Rev. Vermeer's letter since my article gives adequate factual data on the various points raised.

On one point I do wish to answer specifically. It is the objection that the case is being discussed publicly. I think it is high time that the public is informed about the L. A. case, particularly from the viewpoint of its synodical adjudication. The matter is being everywhere talked about, and that without knowledge. The information I gave about the Classical handling of the case was derived from Minutes of actions of Classis *that were open to the public.* The basis of my reflections on the synodical adjudication was the decision of Synod published in the

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1960 Acts of Synod. These are matters that are subject to public discussion.

May I briefly say again:

(a) that the synodical statement, repeated by Rev. Vermeer, that Classis had three times advised the Consistory to lift censure is an *incomplete* statement of the facts.

(b) that the consistory had advised Classis of its intention to protest its action *before* the censured party appealed to Synod.

(c) that Classis had accepted this declaration, and in a recorded Minute *rejected* a proposal to take the mother to Synod. The charge of "stalling" is therefore most unfair.

(d) that the case was fully in process in Classis by the *explicit agreement of consistory and Classis* when Synod undertook to intervene.

HARRY R. BOER

DEAR EDITORS:

Dr. Henry Stob in his article on "The Positive Mind" has done a masterful job of analyzing the "minds" which exist in the Church and it has so stimulated my thinking that I desire to enter into dialogue. When one does this he pays the greatest compliment to the author.

What gladdens my heart about this article is that we are now getting around to talking about *feelings* — feelings of fear, hostility, and love which we have toward each other. This is refreshing. Both as a member and a minister in the Christian Reformed Church I wish to say I am weary of our intellectualized, verbal battles of the past. Most laymen I am sure will agree with me that, for example, most of that hoopla about Scriptural infallibility is simply a religiously sanctioned, intellectualized way to express hate. It is time to remind ourselves that behind every thought is a feeling and that the human tendency is to hide nasty feelings behind nice, neat, respectable words. The best human relationships, however, result when people are open and direct in their feelings. I think Dr. Stob has taken a step in this direction when he talks about "minds" which he could also have called "attitudes" or "feelings."

But now, what shall we do with these feelings? Dr. Stob's task was limited to a delineation and brief article for the simple reason that he never intended to say all things in one article. But we can put the question to ourselves with profit.

First off, one might be inclined to say: Let us work for the elimination of attitudes of fear and hostility by converting these people to the Positive Mind. As I read the article it seems that such a thrust is implied and if I am correct then the implications should be faced. If the Positive Mind goes in this direction it unwittingly becomes the Militant Mind and takes on the characteristic attitude of that mind: authoritarianism. I fear this the more because, by implication, the Positive Mind makes some sort of a claim to wholeness by laying under judgment the claims to wholeness of the Militant and Safe Minds. This cannot but result in a false sense of omniscience in the people who identify with the Positive Mind while driving the other Minds to deeper cover and/or sharper resistance. Such an unfortunate result need not necessarily follow Dr. Stob's delineation, but our past history reveals that it will be difficult to avoid unless we can adopt a new behavior pattern. More specifically, we might consider the following:

(1) We cannot expect the Minds of Safety and Militancy to go in the direction of Positivity until we who wish to represent the Positive Mind effect some basic changes in ourselves. I can vividly illustrate this by reference to a pastoral counseling problem. Suppose a wife comes to a pastor with the complaint that her husband is becoming an alcoholic. An inept counselor will "buy" the complaint and remonstrate with that awful drunkard. A wise counselor, however, will understand that the *wife* rather than the husband came to him; that the wife *is* ready for help; that there is no helping the husband until he is ready for it; and that if some changes can be brought about in the behavior and attitudes of the wife, there is a good chance that her husband will make some corresponding changes.

Applying the above, we begin with the fact that the three Minds are all Christian, all living within the Christian Church. But one Mind feels the need to lead and suggest changes to the other two minds. Right here we need a love as harmless as a dove and as wise as a serpent — a love which *accepts* others both in their loveliness and their ugliness; a love which blesses the existence of others; and yet a love which will evoke the loved person to a greater, purer love. Such love is elicited when the one who loves first makes some changes in himself rather than throwing the onus of change to another.

(2) As to what such a possible first move might be, I have a thought. Would it not be a wise move to make it crystal clear by words and deeds that we of the Positive Mind mean to abandon the illusion of a monolithic church and, just as important, embrace the reality of the presently existing heterogeneous character of the Church? This would bless the other Minds with acceptance and encourage them to lose their defensiveness. But to do that the Positive Mind must first be undefended. The purpose of such an operation is to accept other minds *as they are* and, hopefully, to cut to a minimum the hostility that exists between the Minds. Nothing but chaos results in a family in which each member is trying to change the other. This is not to deny *essential differences* between people and groups but it is possible to learn to live in the same house, the same Church, and why not even in the same magazine? It would rock the Church no end to find a helpful, non-belligerent article in the *Torch and Trumpet* written by an editor of the *Reformed Jour-*

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nal! It would seem that when we of the Positive Mind are *able and willing* to change in some such drastic fashion, we may then hope for some changes in others.

(3) Finally, in reflecting on the problem of the diverse minds within the Church, I feel again that so much of our problem boils down to our authoritarian character. The mood of this orientation is totalitarian rather than equalitarian; the "power-people" at the top unconsciously use the structure of the Church to satisfy their needs to control; authoritarianism manipulates people by holding up perfectionistic standards which insure a guilty feeling and a judgment of self-condemnation; it lives by rules and mores thereby making close relationships impossible; it sees other groups as a threat because they are not controllable; it tends to make hostility a way of life; it promotes overdependency and thereby weakns the group which is desperately trying to grow. Someday we may want to look more closely at ourselves and make some changes. I have a deep conviction that people change when they are ready for it and ask for it.

EARL JABAY

COMMENT

Rev. Jabaay's letter has the merit of calling attention to a facet of Love's structure which must be kept in focus if the whole is not to be distorted. Love, like humility, can readily be corrupted. It is dangerous to cultivate humility by giving thought, for humility is by nature unselfconscious. It is also dongerous to measure progress in humility, for when the verdict is favorable pride is born. So it is with Love. Love can be recommended; it cannot be forced by power techniques. It can be prayed for; it cannot be gloated over or made the instrument of self-righteous disdain of others. So much is very true, and I hope that in my writings I have not left unremarked my awareness of these things. Yet Love, like humility, must be possessed; it is divinely enjoined. Also it must cast out Fear and Hostility; this is its nature. It was the object of my most recent article to declare this. The "casting out" must certainly be in Love's own way; it must be done by deepening understanding, developing sympathy, exercising tolerance, and establishing fellowship. To forget this is indeed to lapse once more into militancy, and militancy is to be decried. On this, and on the need for positivity, Rev. Jabaay and I are quite agreed. Yet his call for taking stock is pertinent and needful. Nothing is so easy as self-deception; nothing is so hard as really doing what we know to be the truth.

HENRY STOB

We are happy to announce that an outstanding Christian student of art and scholar expects to be in this country for two or three months, beginning this September. His name is Hendrik Roelof Rookmaaker.

We learned to know Dr. Rookmaaker through correspondence during the last four years as we tried to find out what was being done by Christians in regard to art here and in the Netherlands. We discovered that not much was being done anywhere. But in Dr. Rookmaaker we have an outstanding example of a Christian scholar steeped in the history of art and in its interpretation.

Dr. Rookmaaker was born in the Hague in 1922. Already in high school he became interested in American Negro Music and started to collect records. After many vicissitudes during World War II he started his studies in the History of Art at the Municipal University of Amsterdam. He also studied philosophy at the Free University. From 1949 to 1957 he was the art critic of *Trouw,* the leading Christian newspaper of the Netherlands. In the meanwhile Dr. Rookmaaker taught art at several institutions, including the Art Institute of the University of Leyden and the Municipal University of Amsterdam, where, in 1957, he obtained his doctor's degree on the thesis, "Synthetist Art Theories, Genesis and Nature of the Ideas on Art of Gauguin and His Circle."

This was published in English.

Dr. Rookmaaker has written in many magazines, including several articles on various aspects of art in *Philosophia Reformata.* He is collaborator for art for the Christian Encyclopedia, the Encyclopedia of the Sovereign Grace Publishers, Evansville, Indiana, and the *Zoeklicht Encyclopedie.*

It was like a bolt from the clear sky when we received his latest work, just off the press, "Jazz, Blues, and Spirituals." This is a work that is fantastic in the right sense. The author evaluates these types of music from the Christian point of view. He writes that the book is especially meant for Christian young people who are wrestling with the problem of what to do with this type of music.

The author is anxious to have this book translated. Anyone who translates this book and thus makes it possible for the English audience to read it, will do a great service not only to art, but to Christianity itself. We should feel humbled when we think of the fact that a man who lives thousands of miles away writes about the Negro art in our country in such a thorough and scholarly way that nothing that has been written by American Christians can compare with it. May it stimulate us to emulate him.

Dr. Rookmaaker is coming here primarily to spend some time at the Art Institute of New York University to learn how art is being taught in the U.S.A. But he will also be available for some lectures. At this writing several groups, including Calvin College, have already invited him to speak.

We could say more about this artist and his accomplishments, but we wish to be brief. Dr. Rookmaaker is well versed in the English language, and he is willing to lecture on the following subjects, using slides, records, or tapes:

The Christian and Art
Aesthetics
Art in the Beginning of the 16th Century: reflection of spiritual struggle
Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art
The Landscape Art of Jan Van Goyan, Van Gogh and French Art
Cezanne
Modern Art: an evaluation
Modern Art Since 1945
The Function of Modern Art; Jazz; Negro Spirituals

Dr. Rookmaaker at present is writing a book on *The Christian and Art,* to be published by J. H. Kok of Kampen, Netherlands.

Here is a man who can give us the stimulus we need. He comes highly recommended. We are sorry that we do not have the time to be his booking-agent, but we are willing to do our share. If anyone is interested in translating this history-making book or wishes to engage him as speaker or lecturer, we are but too willing to pass on the information. He will be in the United States from early September to early December.

—PETER G. BERKHOUT
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